

# A WEEKLY INFORMATION DIGEST

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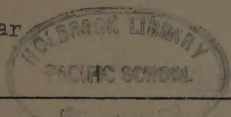
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## On other pages

Churchmen Greet New State.....	2	Anglican Council of South East Asia.....	4
International Radio and TV		Niemöller at Kirk Week Meeting.....	5
Conference.....	3		

## SWITZERLAND

### Release of Hungarian Pastors

(Geneva) - Two of the nine pastors of the Reformed Church in Hungary arrested in the last ten days have been released, according to a cable received in Geneva March 16 by Dr. Marcel Pradervand, executive secretary of the World Presbyterian Alliance.

Dr. Pradervand sent a cable of protest to Janos Horvath, head of the Office of Church Affairs of the Hungarian Government, on March 11. He expressed the concern of the churches over the arrests of Hungarian pastors. A reply, dated March 15, and signed by Horvath said that on his intervention two of the pastors would be with their families within twenty-four hours.

The pastors, both leading Hungarian theologians, were Dr. Barna Nagy, professor of the Reformed Theological Seminary, Budapest, and Sandor Joo, pastor of the Pasaret section of Budapest. All the pastors were alleged to have encouraged the October revolution.

A third pastor, the Rev. Laszlo Agay, was also released, according to word received by Religious News Service in New York. Mr. Agay was pastor of Csepel, a working class district of Budapest.

Five pastors were arrested on March 7 and four more on March 11. The officers of the World Council of Churches have as yet received no reply to their cable of protest sent to the president of the Hungarian government.

Among those arrested on March 11 are pastors Richard Bokoki, former head of the Deaconess Home of the Reformed Church in Budapest and later an interpreter at the Reformed Church Office in Budapest; Laszlo Agay, and his assistant Henrick Flock; Geza Nemeth, assistant pastor of a town near Budapest and prominent in organizing the youth work of the Reformed church; and Endre Gyokossy, pastor of an industrial parish of Budapest-Upjest.

Earlier pastors Joo and Nagy along with Laszlo Szeles, assistant pastor in Budapest, and Andor Bekesy, pastor at Osca, about forty miles from Budapest, were arrested. Dr. Nagy was reported to be seriously ill and under arrest in a hospital. E.P.S., Geneva

## GREECE

### Earthquake Leave 15,000 Homeless

The general secretariat of the World Council of Churches cabled its "deep sympathy" to Archbishop Dorotheos of Athens on March 11, after a series of earthquakes almost flattened the city of Volos and the nearby towns of Velestino and Falsana. More than 15,000 persons are homeless and 300 were injured. It is the third year in succession that the area of Thessaly has been badly damaged by quakes.



The office of the World Council in Greece is standing by to provide aid to the victims when needed. In Geneva, officials of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees are waiting word from a spot investigation in Greece before deciding what additional aid is needed. On March 11, \$500 was received in Geneva from the Evangelical and Reformed Church in the U.S.A.  
E.P.S., Geneva

GHANAChurchmen Greet New State

Churches and churchmen around the world joined in greeting the new African state of Ghana, when it became independent on March 6.

Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, cabled the Rev. Peter Dagadu, secretary of the Ghana Christian Council that the World Council "prays for God's blessing on the independent life of your country." The new nation of Ghana extended invitations to representatives of various missionary agencies working there to join its celebration. Among them was Dr. Fritz Raaflaub, of the Basle Mission Society which began Christian work on the Gold Coast.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, as president of the British Council of Churches, sent a message to the Ghana Christian Council, conveying "warm Christian greetings. Since 1929 your council has drawn the churches together in increasingly effective cooperation. As we send you our congratulations and good wishes at this historic moment, we pray that the unity to which you have attained will prove a source of growing strength to the whole nation in the years to come."

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. sent a message to the former Gold Coast colony, conveyed by the vice-chairman of the NCC's General Board, Bishop D. Ward Nichols of New York. Bishop Nichols represented the African Methodist Episcopal Church at the independence ceremonies.

At present, about fifty per cent of the population of the new nation is Christian. The largest Protestant churches are the Presbyterian and Methodist. Other churches include the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Baptist. Nearly all of Dr. Kwane Nkrumah's cabinet attended Christian mission schools.  
E.P.S., Geneva

THE CAMEROONSThe Churches in the Cameroons Become Independent

On Sunday, March 10, the Evangelical and Baptist Churches in the Cameroons celebrated their independence from the authority of the Evangelical Missionary Society of Paris.

The event was marked by a ceremony held in the centenary church at Douala and by other events, attended by Pastor Charles Westphal, vice-president of the French Protestant Missionary Society and of the French Protestant Federation, Paul Conord, general secretary of the Reformed Church of France, and Mr. Etienne Jung, president of the Directory of the Church of the Augsburgian Confession.

Before visiting Yaoundé to contact the political authorities and different mission stations, the representatives of the French Mission also attended the General Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Cameroons on March 11-12, and the Council of Evangelical and Baptist Churches.  
E.P.S., Geneva

SOUTH AFRICAChurches Attack Bill to Control Church Services

Churchmen in South Africa are protesting against a bill now before parliament that would give the government control over church services attended by both Europeans (whites) and Africans. Under the proposed measure, permission is required from the Minister of Native Affairs to conduct, in urban areas, any church, school, hospital, club, institute or place of entertainment which admits Africans. Excepted are places that were established in 1938 or before.

Minutes before his sudden death on March 7, the Archbishop of Cape Town, Geoffrey Clayton, signed a letter to Prime Minister Strydom on behalf of all the Anglican bishops in South Africa, protesting against the measure.



the right of an official of the secular government to determine whether or where a member of the church of any race shall discharge his religious duty of participation in public worship or to give instructions to the minister of any congregation as to whom he shall admit to membership of that congregation."

Recognizing the gravity of disobeying the law and the command to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, the bishops said there are "some matters which are God's and not Caesar's, and we believe that the matters dealt with in this bill are among them."

"It is because we believe this," the letter continued, "that we feel bound to state that if the bill were to become law in its present form we should find ourselves unable to obey it or to counsel our clergy and people to do so. We therefore appeal to you not to put us in a position in which we have to choose between obeying our conscience and obeying the law of the land."

Mr. Storey, president of the Methodist Church of South Africa, which has a million members, declared, "We have reached the point where disobedience as citizens becomes obedience to God. This action on the part of the authorities is a direct attack on freedom of worship and freedom of conscience."

The Rev. Edgar Wilkinson, prominent Cape Town Methodist minister, said that preventing an African from attending any church which has been open to him until now "would be a most serious violation of religious liberty".

Roman Catholic Archbishop Own McCann of Cape Town said "the implications of this bill are such that the government claims the right to prohibit any particular section of the population from attending a particular church."

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Pretoria also condemned the bill, insisting that the church was open to all people of whatever race or colour. During the eighty years that it had been at work in South Africa the Roman Catholic Church has never closed its doors to anyone, he said.

The action council of the Christian Council of South Africa, in a statement representing the views of twenty-three churches and missionary societies, condemned the bill, saying, "We must utterly reject any law which restricts the freedom of men to assemble in public worship."

Mr. H. F. Verwoerd, minister for Native Affairs, explained his attitude to the protests from the churches during an interview with the "Cape Argus" (a daily paper published in Cape Town). He said the projected bill was not an infringement of freedom of conscience. He said, "The question is only to ensure that religious services are not misused for political purposes." E.P.S., Geneva

## GERMANY

## International Radio and TV Conference

(Frankfurt) - Two hundred delegates from five continents have been invited to participate in an international conference on the use of radio and television in "Bringing Modern Man to a Christian Life". The conference, under the auspices of the World Committee for Christian Broadcasting, will be held at Kronberg Castle, near Frankfurt, Germany, April 25 through May 1.

Experts in the field of radio and television will meet to discuss world-wide strategy as it relates to Christian broadcasting. They will hear a wide range of speakers including Asians, Africans, Europeans, North and South Americans, and an Australian.

Executives of two major American networks, CBS and NBC; a UNESCO communication expert; the heads of religious broadcasting for the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, and the director of a church-owned radio station in the Philippines are among those scheduled to address the week-long session.

The WCBB was formed by representatives of Christian churches in many nations at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, in 1953. Co-chairmen are Dr. W. Burton Martin, of the mass communication arm of the Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches, U.S.A. and the Rev. H. Werner von Meyenn, head of the church radio center,



Religious and social patterns in various continents and their bearing on Christian broadcasting will be highlighted at the meeting. The needs of special groups of listeners such as housewives, youth, farm families, and others will be considered. E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATESNational Council of Churches Reviews Threats to Liberty

The policy-making General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. endorsed efforts of church councils and other groups to ease racial tensions in their areas at its meeting on February 27-29 in Williamsburg, Virginia.

At the same time, the General Board reviewed threats to religious and civil liberties in the United States, as reported by the NCC's Department of Religious Liberty. Of particular concern, the report said, are threats to public schools from state laws that would pay, from tax funds, parents who send their children to private schools to avoid racial desegregation in public schools; violence against racial minorities; and cancellation of the scheduled television premiere of the film "Martin Luther" by WGN-TV in Chicago, because of alleged religious pressure (see page 5). The board commended the council's president, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, and its general secretary, Dr. Roy G. Ross, for their "prompt action" in protesting against the television cancellation last December.

In other action, the General Board, which meets four times a year, urged church members to press Congress for legislation that would help stranded Hungarian refugees in Europe to come to the U.S.

Reports showed that five million copies of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible have been circulated since publication in 1952.

The board established a Walter Van Kirk memorial fund in memory of the Methodist clergyman and former executive head of the Council's Department of International Affairs, who died last July. The fund will finance special projects in the cause of international justice and goodwill. E.P.S., Geneva

PHILIPPINESAnglican Council of South-East Asia

(Manila) - The possible opening of a new missionary diocese in Thailand was one of the matters considered at the second Anglican Council of the Church in South-East Asia, held recently in Manila. The Council also considered the need for literature written for South-East Asia that could be translated in each diocese. It was stressed that some sects were spending thousands of dollars on propaganda, making it necessary for the church to have some simple form of stressing its teaching.

The Manila meeting coincided with a festival of witness organized jointly by the Philippine Independent Church and the Philippine Episcopal Church. The Independent Church sought freedom from Roman control at the end of the last century and in 1947 their bishops were consecrated by the American Episcopal Church. The two groups have at present no intercommunion, but the Independent Church's ordination candidates are trained at the Anglican St. Andrew's Seminary. E.P.S., Geneva

ITALYConstitution Court Holds Hearings in Evangelical Case

(Rome) - Italy's new Constitutional Court has held hearings in a case involving the right of an Evangelical preacher to hold religious services without previous police authorization.

The defendant is the Rev. Umberto Lasco of Rome, who is charged with conducting the services without a permit as required under the 1931 Fascist laws. His attorneys contend that Articles 17 and 19 of the 1948 Constitution abrogate the earlier laws. A decision is expected in about two months.

Observers in Italy see the case as one of "crucial importance", since it will determine which rules are to be applied to the religious activities of the Protestant churches. It is, they say, the conclusive phase of a ten-year struggle of the Protestant churches to obtain recognition of the freedom and rights granted by the Constitution.

E.P.S., Geneva



## UNITED STATES

### "Martin Luther" Has TV Premiere

The film "Martin Luther" has been shown on television for the first time. The first showing was on March 8 on a station in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, eighty miles from Chicago, where the originally scheduled premiere was cancelled last December because of alleged Roman Catholic pressure (see EPS No. 3).

Earlier, a leading Roman Catholic periodical, "Commonweal," had criticized the Catholics who blocked the showing of WGN-TV in Chicago. In a 1,200 word editorial in the February 15 issue, the magazine said, "No matter how good their intentions, they have damaged the fabric of our democratic society; they have damaged the Catholic Church; and they have damaged relationships between Catholics and Protestants in this country." Reviewing the development in the controversy, "Commonweal" said, "There can be little doubt that the flood of phone calls and letters objecting to the film came from Catholics" and "whether the Catholics were organized or not... their pressure caused a television station to cancel the showing of 'Martin Luther'."

A brief supported by more than forty Protestant groups has been filed with the Federal Communications Commission asking for a public hearing on the banning of the film.  
E.P.S., Geneva

## U.S.S.R.

### Baptists Report 15,000 Baptisms

In January the Rev. Yakov Zhidkov, president of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists in Russia, wrote the Baptist World Alliance that there were about 15,000 persons baptized in 1956, all of them eighteen or older. Next September the church is planning to celebrate its ninetieth anniversary, he wrote. The hymnal has been printed and is in use in many churches and the printers "have promised us that the Bible will be ready for distribution in February or March."  
E.P.S., Geneva

## AUSTRIA

### Conference of Hungarian Pastors Living Abroad

Twenty-three Hungarian Lutheran pastors, at the request of the Lutheran World Federation, met in Vienna early in March to discuss the spiritual ministry among Hungarians now in the West.

From the meeting came definite plans for a Lutheran church paper published in Hungary in Europe. The editor will be a Hungarian pastor now living in Norway. A similar newspaper to be published in the United States was suggested. There is at present a great lack of Bibles, hymnals and catechisms among the refugees, the pastors were told. The group from nine countries rejected the idea of founding a Hungarian church in exile.

During the conference a special service was held on March 3 in the Lutheran church in Vienna, attended by Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, executive secretary of the LWF, Bishop Gerhard May of Vienna and a large congregation of Hungarian refugees. In the sermon Dr. Vilmos Vatja said that spiritual care for refugees must be completely free from political or national ambitions. Its sole concern is to preach the Christian message, he said. Dr. Vatja, a Hungarian who is now a citizen of Sweden, is director of the department of Theology of the LWF.  
E.P.S., Geneva

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Niemöller Speaks at Kirk Week Meeting

(Aberdeen) - Dr. Martin Niemöller of Germany began the final preparatory meetings for the August Scottish Kirk Week when he addressed 1,500 persons on February 28 in Aberdeen.

Kirk Week, patterned after the famous German Kirchentag, is set for August 5-11 and is a project of the Tell Scotland Movement and Mission. It will bring about 2,400 persons to Aberdeen from congregations all over Scotland. There will be 200 youth delegates, 200 speakers and group leaders and 200 delegates from overseas.

The Rev. Colin Day, organizing secretary for Kirk Week, describes the rally where Dr. Niemöller spoke as an "unqualified success".  
E.P.S., Geneva

